



**Written Public Hearing Testimony of
Sharon M. Palmer, Commissioner
Department of Labor
Program Review and Investigations Committee
October 3, 2013**

Good Afternoon Senator Kissel, Representative Mushinsky, Senator Fonfara, Representative Carpino and members of the Program Review and Investigations Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with written testimony regarding your **Reemployment of Older Workers Study**.

I support your study efforts because it is a priority of my Agency to decrease the unemployment rate for all populations within our state, including older workers. The Connecticut Department of Labor is sensitive to the challenges facing older unemployed workers (ages 50 and older). We already have many programs and services in place to assist the unemployed worker as they seek job-related training, reentry into the workforce and other educational and training programs.

The Department of Labor's Office of Research has a great deal of information on its website that is helpful for job seekers including, older workers. The Connecticut Occupational Employment and Wage data provides employment and wage data by occupation, which job seekers can utilize in making employment and career decisions. Further, every two years, our Office of Research economists create ten-year industry employment forecasts. These forecasts are useful for all jobseekers in deciding what field may be appropriate for further employment or training.

Some of the services and programs currently provided by the Department of Labor are beneficial to all unemployed workers, including the older unemployed worker. Examples include:

CTWorks One Stop Career Centers

CTWorks Centers are located throughout the state, offering resources ranging from employment workshops and résumé assistance for jobseekers to recruitment services and tax credit programs for employers. Centers also provide Labor Market Information, an electronic job bank and specialized veterans' services. Additional services include Job Search and Career Workshops (such as workshops on social networking and job search strategies which greatly assist older workers), business seminars, fully-equipped computer labs and resource libraries, career counseling, skills assessment, job development, placement assistance, job training, tuition assistance programs, and copying, mailing and faxing services. Whether a person is unemployed, looking for a different job, or interested in getting back into the labor market, CTWorks services are available to anyone, regardless of employment status.

Local Workforce Investment Boards

Local Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) are responsible for oversight, strategic planning and policy making related to workforce development activities provided through local One Stop Career Centers. The membership of the WIBs includes representatives of community-based organizations, state and local organized labor, state and municipal government, human service agencies, economic development agencies, community colleges and other educational institutions, including secondary and post-secondary institutions and regional vocational technical schools. There are five WIBs in Connecticut. The CTDOL currently partners and collaborates with the WIBs on many beneficial programs that assist unemployed workers, including various employment services for older workers.

Connecticut Job Fairs

Unlike other fairs that are profit driven, our main concern is connecting skilled and qualified jobseekers with employment opportunities that local companies have to offer. Connecticut Job and Career Fairs are held at various sites throughout the state, offering employers and jobseekers an effective and economical way to solve their employment needs. At each fair, attendees have the chance to meet with prospective employers. Also available at the fairs are Certified Professional Résumé Writers for résumé critiquing, access to our electronic job matching system, and information on employment, educational and job training programs.

Connecticut's Job Central Website

Career counselors and Certified Professional Résumé Writers in the Connecticut Department of Labor offices are available to assist unemployed workers in planning their job search and creating an attractive and effective résumé. Unemployed workers can view hundreds of job openings posted by Connecticut employers on Connecticut's Job Central Website at: www.jobcentral.org/ct/. While unemployed workers are browsing the site, they can post their résumé into the Job Central for Connecticut employers to view.

Connecticut's Reemployment Portal

Job hunting requires some creative thinking. Whether an unemployed worker has been in the same job for many years or is faced with the need to "transition" to a new job or make a career change, the Department of Labor's recognizes the difficulties this type of change can bring. The CTDOL's Office of Research has developed Connecticut's Reemployment Portal to inform and prepare unemployed workers to take charge of their career. Connecticut's Reemployment Portal displays occupations with similar characteristics such as knowledge areas, tools and technology, and general work activities for the unemployed worker's selected occupation which will assist them to find areas of employment.

Connecticut's Subsidized Training and Employment Program (Step Up)

Step Up provides wage and training subsidies to employers that hire an unemployed jobseeker. The program, administered by the Connecticut Department of Labor and the

state's five Workforce Investment Boards, helps small businesses hire employees and expand their workforce. Step Up also includes an Unemployed Armed Forces Member Subsidized Training and Employment Program to help former military personnel find new employment.

Veterans' Workforce Development

The CTDOL recognizes our veterans, the service they have performed on behalf of our country, and we thank them for their service. Our Office for Veterans' Workforce Development assists veterans of any age in acquiring the various benefits and services they might be entitled to receive, and to make the transition from military to civilian life as seamless as possible. The Office for Veterans' Workforce Development provides information on employment assistance, unemployment insurance, veteran preference and benefits options, training opportunities, women's issues, job fairs, career coaching, résumé preparations, job search workshops, veteran's services, and legislative updates and current events relating to veterans. In addition, the unit's Veterans' Employment Specialists – who are all veterans – work one-on-one meetings with unemployed veterans to assist with job search and link them to other related services.

Incumbent Worker Training Program

The Incumbent Worker Training Program is a program geared to prevent unemployment for Connecticut's workforce, including older workers. Training grants are available to help companies grow and maintain competitiveness by investing in training of their existing workforce. A Business Services Consultant works directly with a company to design, develop, and provide funding for projects and helps businesses locate appropriate training providers. Programs can include training designed to increase the basic skills of employees in regard to written and oral communication, mathematics and science, or training in technical and technological skills.

Office of Apprenticeship

Apprenticeship, in simple terms, is a program of "learning while earning." Unlike other vocational training, which is held in a school setting, apprenticeship is based solidly on an employer-employee relationship. The apprentice employee has voluntarily entered into a mutual agreement with an employer regarding training. It can thus be perceived that employment and training are interrelated. Apprenticeship can also be a vehicle for older workers to re-enter the workforce.

Trade Adjustment Assistance

Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) provides assistance to workers in firms competitively hurt by foreign trade. The TAA program offers a variety of benefits and services to eligible workers, including job training, income support, job search and relocation allowances, a tax credit to help pay the costs of health insurance, and a wage supplement to certain reemployed trade-affected workers 50 years of age and older. These benefits are provided at no expense to employers. A component of the TAA program, Trade Readjustment Allowances (TRA), provides income support to workers enrolled in full-time training. Also, individuals 50 years of age and older who return to

lower-paying work may be eligible to receive Reemployment Trade Adjustment Assistance (RTAA) wage subsidies.

I hope this information regarding the services, programs and data provided by the Connecticut Department of Labor will assist in your efforts with some of the areas of analysis for the report. I and my staff will be available if you have any follow-up questions or need further information regarding the study. Thank you again for this opportunity to provide written testimony to you regarding the Reemployment of Older Workers Study.